"S'Matter, Pop?"

By C. M. Payne

The New Plays

"Trial Marriage" Lends Itself to Ridicule.

BY CHARLES DARNTON.

A NEW idea is, of course, just what we're all looking for over the footlights, but—and here's where the loud pedal of the typesetting machine may be used to good effect—the idea must be a true and a big one to make it convincing.

These few remarks lead, as you may guess, to "Trial Marriage," a misguided play by Elmer Harris that ran its strange course at the Hudson Theatre last night. There were long breathing spells between the three acts that gave the audience plenty of time to put on its thinking-cap. The first thought to pop into the mind was that a man who made his living by lecturing to women on trial marriage could be considered, at best, as nothing more than an afternoon-tea sort of hero. As for the heroine, who went in for hospital work and so gave promise of becoming a useful member of society, she crumpled into a weak sister when she allowed herself to be carried off to the Maine woods by the tailor-made prophet of love without the wedding ring.

Helen Ware as Marie Luise Ridgway.

An author who writes a play, or a manager who produces it, should first of all ask himself whether the play has a general appeal founded upon the facts of life. While the title may suggest something intensely modern, with formal announcement of the period of trial, it takes something more than neat sophistries to beat the old matrimonial game. And after all is said and done, a man who proposes trial marriage to the woman he pretends to love stamps himself as a coward. Moreover, by failing to work out the theory of genuine trial marriage the author in this purely theatric instance misses his chance to outrun the so-called advanced thought on the subject.

"Trial Marriage" proved a trial in more than one respect. The newspaper clippings of unhappy marriages that Blair Thomas kept served only to emphasize his flimsy argument that Marie Ridgway should run off with him to a cabin in the Maine woods and remain there until he had decided whether she would "do" for life. To make an audience accept a man like Blair both the author and the actor must endow him with a certain unconscious magnetism and mad idealism. This neither Mr. Harris nor Harrison Hunter, who acted the part of the lover, succeeded in doing. The author did his worst at the outset by making his hero a self-conscious lecturer to light-headed women, while the actor made him seem a fool when he didn't seem a cad.

The murmur that went up last night when Blair put his jealousy into words upon his return to the cabin after an absence of a few days plainly expressed the general opinion of the audience. The alimony-paying actor who had been Marie's innocent companion during this time was simply "Uncle Alec" to her. But Blair had misread certain signs of avuncular affection until he didn't hesitate to say to Marie, "You've been deceiving your family and friends; why couldn't you have deceived me?" The protest that swept over the footlights from the audience was like an ill wind. That Marie should put on her coat and announce she was going to pass the night at her "uncle's" followed as a matter of course. It would not have been surprising to see her throw a lamp at Blair. It was a physical, rather than a dramatic, shock, however, to see Blair seize her by the throat and choke her into insensibility. When she revived, much to his relief, she gathered all her strength together and melodramatically "showed him the door." But he followed her back to New York, of course, and the moment he produced a ring she fell into his arms with a promptness that was almost disappointing.

Harrison Hunter as Blair Thomas.

Meanwhile Marie had rejected a well-heeled but "old shoe" in the form of Richard Huntington, who had been treading the primrose path with such diligence that morally he was on his uppers. The new-fashioned play at this point dropped into an old-fashioned discussion of the double standard of morals for men and women. And when Blair arrived with a ring that he slipped on Marie's finger the play ended in the familiar old-fashioned way. Perhaps this was only to be expected. Authors are seldom as daring as they seem.

But "Trial Marriage" lent itself to ridicule in the farcical behavior of Blair when he betrayed his jealousy. The audience couldn't help laughing at him. No doubt circumstances compelled Harrison Hunter to shake his fist at "Uncle Alec's" house and to do other absurd things. But at best Mr. Hunter was stagey. Charles A. Stevenson saved more than one situation by the ease and charm with which he played the part of the gray-haired actor-friend who had not become embittered by long years of alimony. Here was the one sympathetic character of the play. Mr. Stevenson handled it admirably except when he betrayed the fact that he was feeling his lines in the platitudinous speeches of the last act—which not even genius itself could have carried off.

Miss Helen Ware, as the uncertain heroine, had her sincere, if not her sympathetic, moments. Her lack of physical allurement, however, counted against her in her lighter moods, and her trick of winking with nearly every word when her angry passions rose served to mar her performance. Ernest Stallard, as Huntington, took his medicine like a good-natured man of the world. It is not at all likely that the public will take "Trial Marriage" so cheerfully.

A WIRELESS "BELT."

The Russian duma has been asked to appropriate $515,000 for the erection and equipment of wireless stations on the Kara and White seas. The project is intended to insure telegraphic communication via the Arctic Ocean between the northern parts of Siberia and St. Petersburg, Russia.

∴ Some Day---(Maybe) ∴

Men Who Break Engagements

By Sophie Irene Loeb

SOPHIE IRENE LOEB.

"A MAN'S merit should be judged by the way he keeps his engagements," said a wise soul. "For all the miseries in the world could be summed up in these two words, 'BROKEN PROMISES.'"

From the very beginning of promising the child something and not FULFILLING that promise to the "O Promise Me" at the altar, with its consequent answer in the divorce court, and so on, the unhappiness of existence finds its foundation at the root of an unkept agreement.

It is the easiest thing in the world to make a promise. But to break one carries with it its wall of woe.

Yet, mark you, it is not always the aggrieved one who is the sufferer, but most often the breaker HIMSELF.

He gets the habit, then the habit gets him.

Said a prominent business man the other day in speaking of a man who was in the line of promotion:

"He had been in our concern for several years and the NEXT step was one of responsibility. But we gave the position to the man below him, for we could DEPEND upon the latter.

"When he said he would do a thing he DID it. But the other fellow, when he worked, was very, very good; and when he didn't—there was nothing to do about it.

"So we just kept him for what he was worth. As long as he held no position of trust, where every move means money, or loss, it was all right. He gave a fair amount of efficiency.

"But he was LAX in fulfilling the trifling needs that in the summing-up meant MUCH indeed. So he will likely always remain in a rut, occupying places that carry little or no RESPONSIBILITY."

Then there is the cheap who makes an engagement with a lady. Many times he makes it lightly, VERY lightly indeed.

Probably he has no intentions of FULFILLING it. Perhaps just a little while before the time appointed he calls up on the telephone and pleads some business deal or something.

A telephone is an instrument by which one may break an engagement with EASE. But though the young woman may lose the engagement, the man, in reality, is the loser in the END.

For the very ease with which he does the breaking makes it a COMMON OFFENSE with him until one day he wakes up to wonder why he has no friends.

The old saying "you can't fool all the people all of the time" holds good here as well. And he is "spotted" among the young women of his acquaintance.

Thus, times without number, he is dropped from the list.

Also the young woman who breaks one engagement for another that seems to give promise of a BETTER time usually wishes (as experience shows) that she had kept the FIRST engagement; since many times the very breaking of it dampens her spirits to the point of not ENJOYING the occasion.

So that, all around, the very feeling of having FULFILLED a promise carries with it the certainty of being honest with one's self. And reward accordingly is not lacking.

History records that the man in the foreground of activity is he alone whose "word is as good as his bond."

And this is one way of judging the frailty or firmness of the everyday human.

HE WHO MAKES A HABIT OF BREAKING PROMISES FINDS THAT THE HABIT FINALLY BREAKS HIM.

A Pocket Encyclopedia.

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441. Why are gold, silver and copper coin stamped with a die, and not "cast"?

442. Why do radiators have rough surfaces?

443. What is the difference between transparent and translucent?

444. How is an electro-magnet made?

445. What are the different parts of an electro-magnet?

THESE questions will be answered Friday. Here are replies to Monday's:

437. (Why is charcoal used as a purifier?)—It absorbs the foul gases, etc., of air and water.

438. (What is shale?)—Shale is a form of slate that splits easily into thin, brittle layers.

439. (What is the origin of the Scottish tartan, or plaid?)—The ancient Picts and Scots tattooed their skins, each tribe or clan having its distinctive colors and pattern. When clothing came into use the Scots dyed and patterned the cloth to represent, as had the tattooing, the color designs of the various clans.

440. (What are the three thermometers used?)—Centigrade, Reaumur and Fahrenheit.

Shenandoah

A Civil War Romance of Sheridan's Ride

By Henry Tyrrell

(Founded on Bronson Howard's Great Play.)

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

A battle is impending in October, 1864, for possession of the Shenandoah Valley. At Belle Bosquet, a Shenandoah county home, several old acquaintances meet by chance. Among them are Col. Kerchival West of the Union Army and Gertrude Ellingham, a Southern girl. Gen. Haverill is in command of a Union division stationed near Belle Bosquet. His son Frank has tried to atone for a former sin by enlisting in the Federal army under the name of Bedloe, and has been wounded and captured. West has acted as go-between for Frank and Haverill's second wife, a young and beautiful woman, who is trying to reform her stepson. Gen. Haverill is ignorant of his wife's efforts in his son's behalf. Edward Thornton, a Southern spy, whose attentions to Mrs. Haverill were pumpeled by West, has stolen from Frank a picture of the young matron. Thornton is captured and searched. West finds on him Mrs. Haverill's picture and pockets it. Thornton wounds West. The picture falls into the hands of Gen. Haverill, who forbids Kerchival to take part in the approaching battle and places him under arrest. West and Gertrude become engaged. The battle of Cedar Creek begins. The Union forces fall back. West, wounded and under arrest, breaks away to rally his regiment. Sheridan's hearing of his army's defeat, gallops from Winchester and turns the retreat into a victory.

CHAPTER XX.

(Continued.)

At the Eleventh Hour.

WHILE Early's troops were still running and Sheridan's reveilling, the customary sad truce was declared in order to permit the removal of the wounded from the field and the decent disposal of the dead. Not only soldiers, but civilians from far and near flocked upon the scene. From Winchester, Kernstown, Newtown, Middletown, up from the valley and down from the mountains came men and women, searching amid the heaped-up horrors where late the battle lines had stood. Some came for love and some—alas!—for loot. Sunset reddened the ghastly field, then fell the inky pall of night, and the lanterns of the ghostly ministrants twinkled in the gloom far beyond the circling camps.

Gertrude Ellingham, Madeline West and Jenny Buckthorn, led by Sergt. Barket and followed by the faithful Josephus, made up one of the most indefatigable groups of rescuers. They had ascertained that Kerchival West was not among the living Federal troops, either in the celebrating camps or in the hospital tents. Now at last they sought a pitiful, uncertain comfort in satisfying themselves that he was not among the dead on the field.

"Gen. Haverill told me," said Gertrude, "that although our—I mean the Southern—troops were defeated, they managed to carry off a considerable number of prisoners. I believe Col. West is among them."

"I know Capt. Heartsease is," murmured Jenny, forlornly.

"If nothing worse has befallen my brother than that," added Madeline, "I suppose I ought to be thankful, as at least he will now be out of the awful fighting. But it is a cruel injustice if that wicked wretch, Capt. Thornton, is still to be at large."

They rode on in silence—for Gen. Buckthorn had seen to it that they were provided with mounts—until at last Gertrude exclaimed:

"I can't rest, anyway—I'm going on. Josephus will follow me. You girls will be all right—won't you, dears?"

"Where are you going?" cried the other two, aghast.

"On to the Ford—and then to Fisher's Hill, or Strasburg, or wherever they have gone. Don't mind me—I'll bring you comforting news, or I won't come back at all. Good night."

And before they could persuade her—that was what she fled from now, as from unbearable torture—she rode off exultantly into the darkness of the mountain shadows, like another Valkyrie bearing her stricken warrior's soul to the glorious and blissful Valhalla.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Valley of Desolation.

BELLE BOSQUET was deserted. For miles around stretched the heart-sickening panorama of fenceless, trampled fields ruined farms and empty granaries. Even the woodlands wore a blighted look, and showed sinister burnt patches on the hillsides. Charred skeletons of dwelling houses and mills, fallen chimneys and blown-up bridges and foundations, lined the turnpike road and its lateral crossings.

If the "crow carrying its rations" across this devastated tract had reached its borders by the leaden light of one of those bleak autumn days, he would have gone into hiding until night-time to complete the journey, so hopelessly drear an aspect pervaded that hollow and silent land.

For Sheridan had accomplished only too literally the fearsome task assigned him by Gen. Grant:

"In pushing up the Shenandoah Valley . . . it is desirable that nothing should be left to invite the enemy to return. Take all provisions, forage and stock wanted for the use of your command. Such as cannot be consumed, destroy."

The same destitution that compelled Early to retreat as far as Newmarket, forty miles south of Cedar Creek, to supply and reorganize the broken Confederate forces, prevented Sheridan from following them into this region. His cavalry, however, during this pause in the movements of the main army, was set about a campaign against the guerilla bands of Mosby and Gilmore.

It was not until a fortnight after the battle of Cedar Creek that Gertrude Ellingham and the small party of friends and neighbors who journeyed with her, and likewise followed the path of necessity as well as of duty and affection in moving southward after the army, came up with the corps that had been Gen. Ramseur's, and which included her brother Robert's regiment.

But Gen. Ramseur had been killed, the cavalry was for the most part dismounted, and Col. Ellingham's precise whereabouts could not be ascertained. He had gone out on a raid with the irregulars who were harassing Sheridan's rear, to prevent his carrying out Gen. Grant's orders to cut Lee's railroad communications by which supplies were brought from the South for the Confederate army at Petersburg.

"And what has Gen. Early done with the prisoners he brought here?" Gertrude inquired, with sinking heart.

"Sent them on to Danville, maybe to North Carolina, and the officers probably to Richmond," was the vague reply she got. "You see, miss, it's hard enough scraping now to feed our own men."

Kerchival West was among those prisoners and so was Capt. Heartsease, and both were seemingly in condition to bear transportation. This much information was elicited on trustworthy authority and it compensated for the hardships and anxieties through which the dauntless Virginian girl had passed. From Staunton she sent these reassuring tidings to Jenny Buckthorn, who remained with her father at Winchester, and to Madeline West, whom Gen. Haverill had sent with an escort to Washington.

Love alone must guide her in her search, Gertrude declared, but she had the courage to resolve that love should win. Her home was broken up, the valley desolated and the cause upon which all had been staked was narrowing down to a deadly crisis where mere self-interest, fortune, even life itself, had to be thrown unhesitatingly into the balance.

While she waited at Staunton for some clue, some enlightenment to determine what direction her pilgrimage should take now that the winter was about setting in, a detachment of the wild mounted troops came up the valley from a successful raid on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in West Virginia. A bearded savage rushed with a glad cry at Gertrude—and she was laughing and crying in her brother's arms.

"Oh, Rob," she faltered, "I was beginning to think I should never see you again, nor any one else I loved."

"Don't give up, Sis!" he enjoined, but his tone was worried and serious. "We are not beaten yet. If we have to leave the valley, the enemy can't stay here, either. He is trying to prevent us from joining Gen. Lee at Petersburg—but in the mean time we are keeping him, and an army bigger than all our forces put together, from going to help Gen. Grant, who after all is no nearer to Richmond than McClellan was two years and a half ago."

"Oh, never mind the armies now. Where can I find those two poor prisoners?"

(To Be Continued.)

Mr. Hoodoo!

He Could Make Good Every Time. BUT—

The Coming Of the Law!